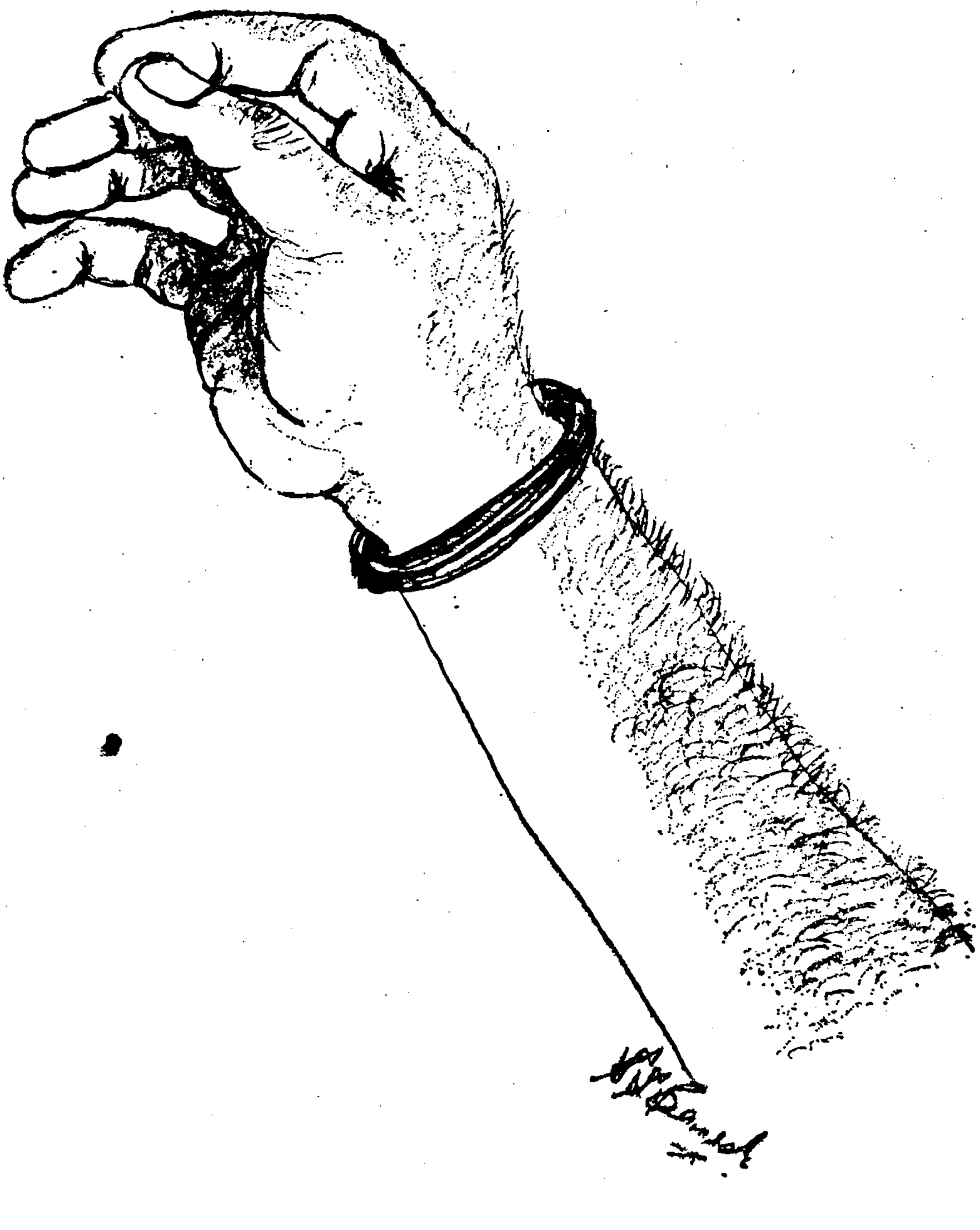
THE SIKH BANGLE



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THE SIKH BANGLE

By

Mohinder Singh 'Cheema,' M.A. (London)

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Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Mr. Mohinder Singh 'Cheema," of 58 Cowdray Way, The Glens, Elm Park (Essex), for contributing this most informative article on 'The Sigh Bangle,' a topic hitherto very scarcely discussed at length in books on Sikhism in English. This booklet is second in the series of introducing the Sikh Symbols, and the Society intends to publish tracts on other Sikh Symbols also in due course of time.

My sincerest thanks are also due to Mr. G. S. Sidhu, Mrs. P. M. Wylam and Mrs. Elaine Khanuja who have painstakingly given their time in reading the manuscript and suggesting various ideas and changes. Mrs. Elaine Khanuja also deserves our gratitude for adding a concise but inspiring foreward to the tract.

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I must acknowledge with thanks the valuable services offered by our young artist friend Mr. Sukhwinder Singh Bamrah, of 78 Napier Road, Gillingham (Kent). This book contains some of the illustrations contributed by him and more will appear in later publications.

In the end I must express my thanks to all the individual donors and Sikh organisations who have generously donated towards the funds of the Society. Without the support of the Guru's blessed **sangat** we couldn't have ventured to embark on this important job of presenting Sikhism to the millions of westerners who sincerely wish to know more and more about Sikhism and its origins and traditions.

27 Pier Road, Gravesend, Kent — Darshan Singh Hothi

1st January, 1972. — Hon. General Secretary,

The Sikh Missionary Society (U.K.)

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FOREWORD

As a non-Sikh, I feel highly honoured to have been asked to contribute a foreword to this concise and interesting article on the Sikh bangle. However, it is not inappropriate to have asked me, because, as Mr. M. S. Cheema admirably points out, the circle has symbolic aspects of universal importance which can help each and every one of us to lead a better life and to draw closer to God. In fact, I am sure that there is hardly any religion in the world that does not invoke the symbolism of the circle somewhere in its practices, e.g. in the Judaeo-Christian religions a ring is given in the marriage ceremony to show that the couple have been united as one and that GOD wishes the marriage to endure for eternity. In myth and legend the circle is important too. King Arthur is said to have used a round table to show that he and his knights were all of equal status. Examples could be given by the dozen.

The wearing of the symbols to remind one of one's duties to God is an excellent custom and by no means unique to the Sikhs, but it has its sadder concomitants too. Some people wear their symbols faithfully, but in time, like a picture on the wall at home, they become so familiar that the owner forgets why he has them and may end up doing the very things these symbols are supposed to remind us not to do. I am always very sad when I see this happen, especially when the person concerned is a Sikh, because this religion is an admirable one from every point of view and in my opinion is the sort of vital force the world needs to-day in order to progress. The caste system and the inequality of women and bribery were three factors which held India back for centuries and Guru Nanak preached against all three, bringing new enlightenment to India.

If you wear symbols but do not act as a Sikh should, then in my opinion, you are not a true Sikh. Symbols alone mean nothing, it is the actions which they inspire which are important. Too many people attach importance to the wearing of these symbols, but forget that a certain standard of behaviour is supposed to result from wearing them and contemplating them. I have seen Sikhs in court for murder and robbery, I have seen a Sikh who was a methylated spirits' addict and I have seen a drunken Sikh visiting his wife in hospital and saying the most dreadful things.

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Actually these men were not true Sikhs. They were going against all that the Gurus taught, but the sad fact is that in the eyes of the public, they were identifiable as Sikhs by their appearance. The members of a minority must strive to lead extra good lives, especially when living outside their own country, because it is only by leading decent, Godly lives that the group can gain respect and spread its message to others. So we must all remember that when we wear the symbols of a faith, a country or a club, we are an ambassador for our group and must not bring dishonour on it by failing to practise the principles of which the symbols are there to remind us. In my opinion, it is better to have no symbols at all than to wear them and blatantly disregard them, thus discrediting our fellows and our faith or our group.

Sociologists have found that the groups leading a close family life and adhering faithfully to their religion have the lowest crime rate in Britain. So wear your symbols proudly, remember each day what they are reminding you of and God will reward you with trouble-free, satisfying life for you and your family. This booklet will be a useful source of reference if you forget what the 'Kara' is trying to tell you. Somehow, I do not think that those who cut their hair in order to get jobs more easily, or who leave off the 'Kara' because it "looks funny" are following in the tradition of the early martyrs or that God will favour them. We know the teachings of the Gurus are good, so let us stick to them unless we wish to be numbered among the ever rising number of drug-addicts, thieves, cheats and doers of violence, etc.; and see that our family and friends do the same.

(Mrs.) Elaine Khanuja,
Apartado 765-La Coruna,
GALICIA. (SPAIN)

25th November, 1971

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Background

Before an attempt is made to bring out the meaning and symbolic significance of the Sikh Bangle, it may be worthwhile to cast a glance at the Great Guru who bestowed the bangle on us and about whom Bhai Gurdas Singh writes:—

"Lo a man is born amongst men
Chivalrous, unfathomable, singular and unique."
(Bhai Gurdas Singh)

God was uniquely generous in bestowing unparalleled qualities upon Guru Gobind Singh—the bestower of the bangle. He was a great scholar, a truth-inspiring multilingual poet, a unique orator, a bewitching musician and singer, a democratic leader, a religious innovator, a skilled warrior, an excellent general, an exemplary martyr, a rare sportsman and a humble and devoted servant of God.

Guru Gobind Singh was a great lover of literature. He translated the Vedas, the Upnishads, etc., into the common language of the people. He employed fifty-two poets to create new literature. He was a great scholar of Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Brijbhasha and Punjabi. Not only could he use these languages most efficiently but he could also write poetry in these languages. His poetry is unique in its rhythm, its colourful use of adjectives and adverbs and its ability to inspire truth. In 'Akal Ustat' (Admiration of God) he has given a record number of 1,760 names to God. When he sang his poetry to the torrential music of Suranda (an Indian musical instrument) the audience was spell-bound and the devotees unconsciously uttered, "Hail Master; Hail Holy One; Thou art Wonderful." His perfect oratory could inspire the people to offer their heads for sacrifice.

He was an excellent democratic leader, who organized the demoralized and oppressed Indian nation into a brave, fearless and honest living community. He gave a crushing blow to the caste system which had appallingly divided and subdivided the Indian community. The people were not only segregated by the caste system, but this segregation, besides generating prejudice, hatred and suspicions, had condemned certain castes as untouchables. He boldly denounced all the roots of segregation-caste, creed and fake religion and declared the democratic equality of

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mankind, "Recognize ye the whole human race as one," he said. In the history of India he was the first man to make the people transcend these differences and to unite them in the sacred cause of truth and honest living. The battle of Bhangani is unique in this respect. People from all walks of life fought shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy under the command of the Guru.

His organization was on democratic lines. In fact he was a great innovator of democracy into religion. He baptised the first five beloved ones and then begged of them to baptise him. Thus he became a follower of his disciples

"Great is Guru Gobind Singh who is the Guru
and the disciple rolled into one."
(Bhai Gurdas Singh)

At times he obeyed his Sikhs, for example he had to leave the fortress of Chamkaur under orders from his Sikhs.

He was a skilled warrior and a renowned general with a sense of sportsmanship. In the art of wielding a sword and in archery, etc., he was singular. He never attacked anybody and he fought only for self-defence. He was neither aggressive himself nor did he tolerate aggression. On the battle-field, he always gave first chance to his enemy. In his turn he never missed a chance. He proved an excellent general by making only forty soldiers fight against hundreds of thousands at Chamkaur and by holding the small fortress for a full day. Even on the battle-field he was a thorough sportsman. He admired the bravery of his enemies. His men gave first-aid even to their wounded enemies. He never employed foul means to win, but preferred a fair struggle even at the cost of worldly defeat. He never lost heart in the face of awful tragedies. After the battle of Chamkaur, he had lost everything but his faith. His feet were terribly wounded by thorns. He had had no sleep for several days as he had to command his army, but he was still in high spirits and exceptionally optimistic in his zeal to uproot evil. It was then that he wrote the "Epistle of Victory" (ZAFFAR NAMAH) a masterpiece of poetry and courage. Soon after this he started gathering a new army. He was a great patriot and martyr. At nine he sent his father, Guru Teg Bahadur, to protect the faith of the Kashmiri Brahmans. This is the unparalleled example of somebody laying down his own life for the faith of other people. It was actually a sacrifice for a fundamental

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human right—the right of worship. He happily sacrificed his four sons, mother, devoted disciples and finally himself for the great cause of truthful living and he liberated his followers from the fear of death.

It is exceptionally remarkable that having all the virtues and good qualities, Guru Gobind Singh was still very humble. He called himself "A puny servant of God." 'By Thy Grace' was always on his lips. He was unique in honouring his devotees

"I am exalted, because ye,
O People, have exalted me."

(Guru Gobind Singh)

His achievements by the age of forty-two stand singular in history and his soul united with the Almighty in the following words:

"O God there is nothing that is mine in me,
All that is me belongs to Thee;
When I surrender to Thee what is Thine,
O what is it then, that belongs to me?"

The great bestower bestowed his rare qualities upon us through his philosophy of Baptism.

Baptism

On the most famous North Indian festival of Baisakhi in the year 1699, Guru Gobind Singh gave an unusual general call to his devotees to assemble in the spacious ground of Anandpur. Thousands of people thronged to Anandpur and on the appointed day assembled before a specially pitched tent, which was carefully decorated for the occasion. Thousands of devoted eyes were longing for a glimpse of the divine master when, lo and behold! he appeared characteristically in a splendid martial uniform, brandishing a sword in his hand. His blissful eyes looked like balls of fire. His face was red and his appearance was terrifying.

The people were stunned and silent. The Master broke the silence in a roaring voice, "I want the head of a devoted Sikh! Is there any Sikh who can quench the thirst of my sword?" What a request! The demand was met by a Sikh called Daya Ram. He was taken into the tent. A thud! And the sound of a falling body!

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The master came out of the tent with his sword dripping blood and looking ever so fierce. In a thundering voice, he shouted again, "I want the head of another devoted Sikh. Is there anybody who loves me more than anything else?" After some time the demand was again met and it was repeated three more times. By this time most of the Sikhs had slipped away. The master did not come out of the tent for some time now. Some were wondering, "What has gone wrong with the Master?" To the amazement of all, the Guru came out with those beloved five, shining in golden robes like the master himself. Look at the unique way the master selected the leaders for a spiritual democracy.

The master took an iron bowl with some clean water in it, and his wife, Jito Ji, added sugar cakes to the water. The Guru stirred the sugar cakes and water with a Khanda (double-edged sword) while all sang the five Sikh prayers in a chorus. The sugar cakes dissolved in the water and the holy hymns transformed the syrup into an elixir. The Guru asked all the five beloved ones to take five draughts of the elixir (Amrit). The Guru also sprinkled it five times into their eyes while they uttered "Waheguru ji ka Khalsa Waheguru ji ki fateh." (The Khalsa belongs to the Wonderful Lord, all glory to Him). Then the Guru put drops of the elixir on to their keshas (hair) while they again uttered, "The Khalsa belongs to the Wonderful Lord and all glory to Him."

After this the Guru changed their names, so that instead of having various suffixes like Das, Ram and Chand, etc., their names ended with Singh (Lion). Thus he gave them one universal Brotherhood (Khalsa) and asked them to wear five symbols. Kesh (long hair), Kangha (a comb), Kirpan (sword), Kara (a steel bangle) and Kaccha (shorts). All the symbols start with 'K' and are thus termed "the 5 Ks."

After having baptised the Sikhs, the master kneeled before them and begged them to baptise him. Thus the master introduced democracy into the spiritual world by becoming the disciple of his own disciples.

The whole process of baptism involves symbolism. Water, being a universal solvent, is symbolic of purity and cleanliness. Having the property of flowing downwards, it is also symbolic of

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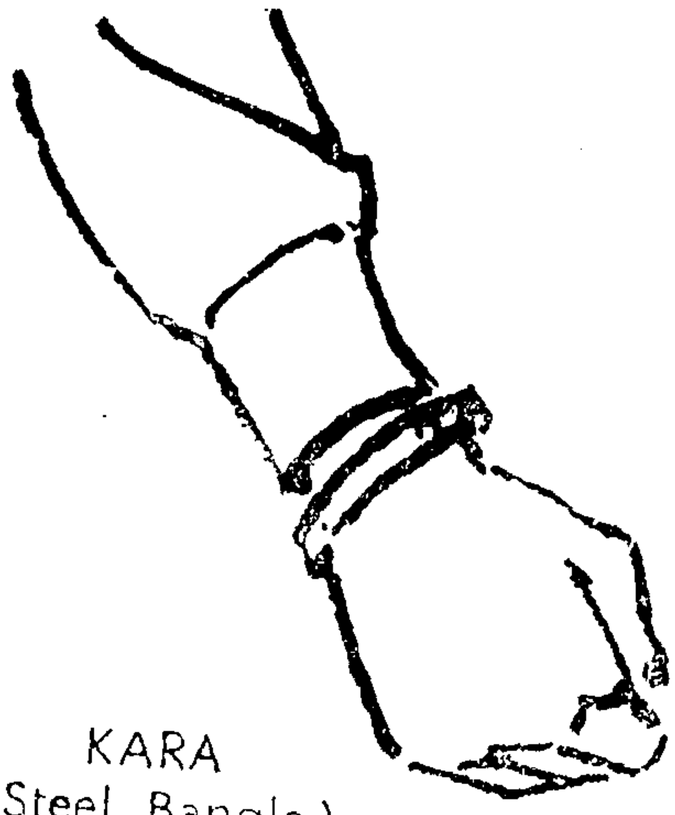
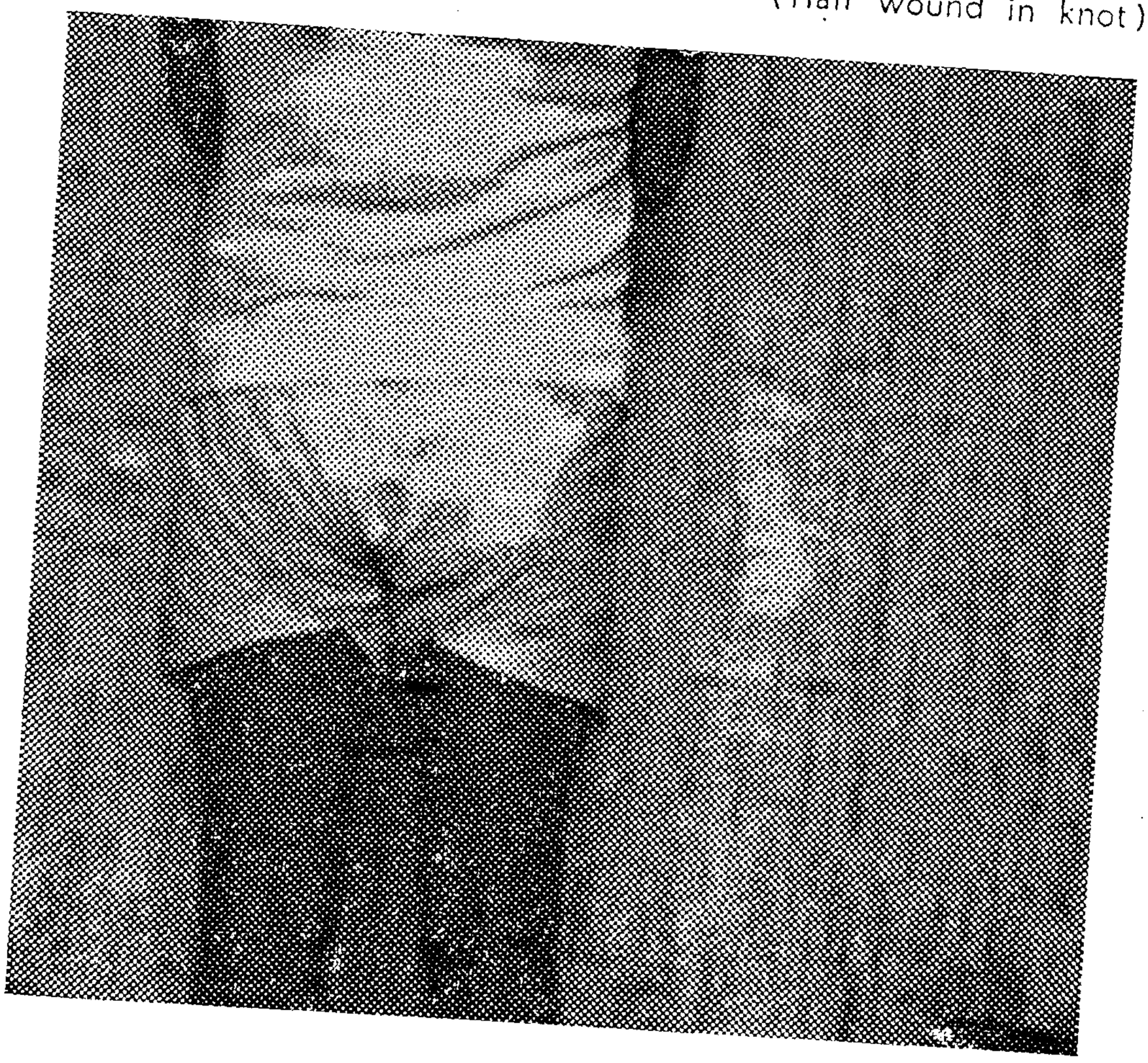


KARA
(Steel Bangle)

KIRPAN
(Symbolic of Active
Resistance against Evil)

KANGHA
(Wooden Comb)

KESH
(Hair wound in knot)



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humility and the Khalsa's concern for the weak and the down-trodden. The Khanda (double-edged sword used as a stirrer) represents power and divinity rolled into one. The readily soluble sugar cakes, losing their individual identity in a universal solvent like water, symbolize the sociability of the Khalso and their free-dom from caste and social divisions. The steel bowl represents the human mind and the Holy mother signifies the symbol of creation. A Sikh's opinion is shaped by the principles laid down by the Guru just as water takes the shape of the bowl into which it is poured. The Khalsa, thus represented an all-embracing, universal Brotherhood of self-appointed guardians of a society, free from caste ridden and pluralistic propensities.

The Indian community was appallingly divided and sub-divided into castes and subcastes and these social grooves were becoming increasingly deeper day by day. Segregation had gene-rated suspicion, hatred and prejudice, to the extent that the work-ing classes were considered inherently inferior people and the people of low castes who had been doing the menial jobs, were considered to be untouchables. There was no sign of equality of human rights and consequently the Indian nation was divided and demoralised. The Khalsa gave a death blow to the caste system and transformed the nation into a single Brotherhood. The holy hymns supplied the new Brotherhood with the divine blessing.

The Guru asked the Khalsa to drink the elixir so that their bodies were purified. He sprinkled the elixir into their keshas so that their intellect was purified. Thus they were physically, as well as intellectually, purified. What remained? They were still to be purified spiritually, and to that end he sprinkled elixir into their eyes so that their vision was purified and they received clear picture of God and His creation. The Sikh baptism thus introduced spiritual democracy, confirming the belief in social equality and the desirability of ideal behaviour.

In order to comprehend the true symbolic significance of the five Sikh symbols and especially of the bangle, it seems imperative that a brief mention should be made of symbolism in general and its importance in religious and social fields.

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Symbolism

A symbol is an object which represents another object, an idea or a sign, usually representing something abstract. Symbolism in human life is analogous to the presence of air in the atmosphere. The atmosphere will not only be useless but meaningless to us in the absence of air. Life cannot be sustained without air, yet ordinary people seldom realize or appreciate the importance of air and attach little value to it. Similarly, symbolism, though an integral part of human life, is seldom appreciated by many of us.

All cultures and human behaviour are thoroughly charged and fully replete with symbolism. Society is peculiarly subject to the influence of symbolism in the fields which are emotionally charged, such as politics (flag colours, etc.) and religion (crosses, domes, etc.).

The etiquette of a society, bowing to superiors or saluting, etc., are nothing but symbolism. A child, prior to learning some phonetic symbols, communicates by signs. It puts forward its arms so as to invite somebody to pick it up. The psychologists confirm that phonetic symbols, (the languages), are symbols of human behaviour. The different shades of meaning attached to a word further exhibit symbolism, e.g. light is a symbol for knowledge, wisdom or truth while darkness is a symbol for death and mourning, and white is a symbol for purity and virginity, etc.

The commercial world exploits symbolism very deliberately. In England a barber has a red and white pole, a pawn broker has three golden balls outside his shop. Look at your watch, it is a certain make and accordingly the company has put some symbols on it. Likewise various firms put different symbols on their products. How these symbols make us buy their goods can be explained only by expert psychologists. Certain symbols, for example, phonetic symbols (languages), are meaningful to almost everybody and thus useful to them. However some symbols such as religious symbols, are not intelligible to most of us, but are meaningful and useful only to the experts. A single word often carries wider and deeper meanings (by symbolism) than the simple word itself. For example, the words Negro, European, Indian, etc., are intelligible to everybody, but Homo Sapiens is intelligible to some only. To those few, it is more meaningful than each of the simple words, as it represents not only all of them, but more than

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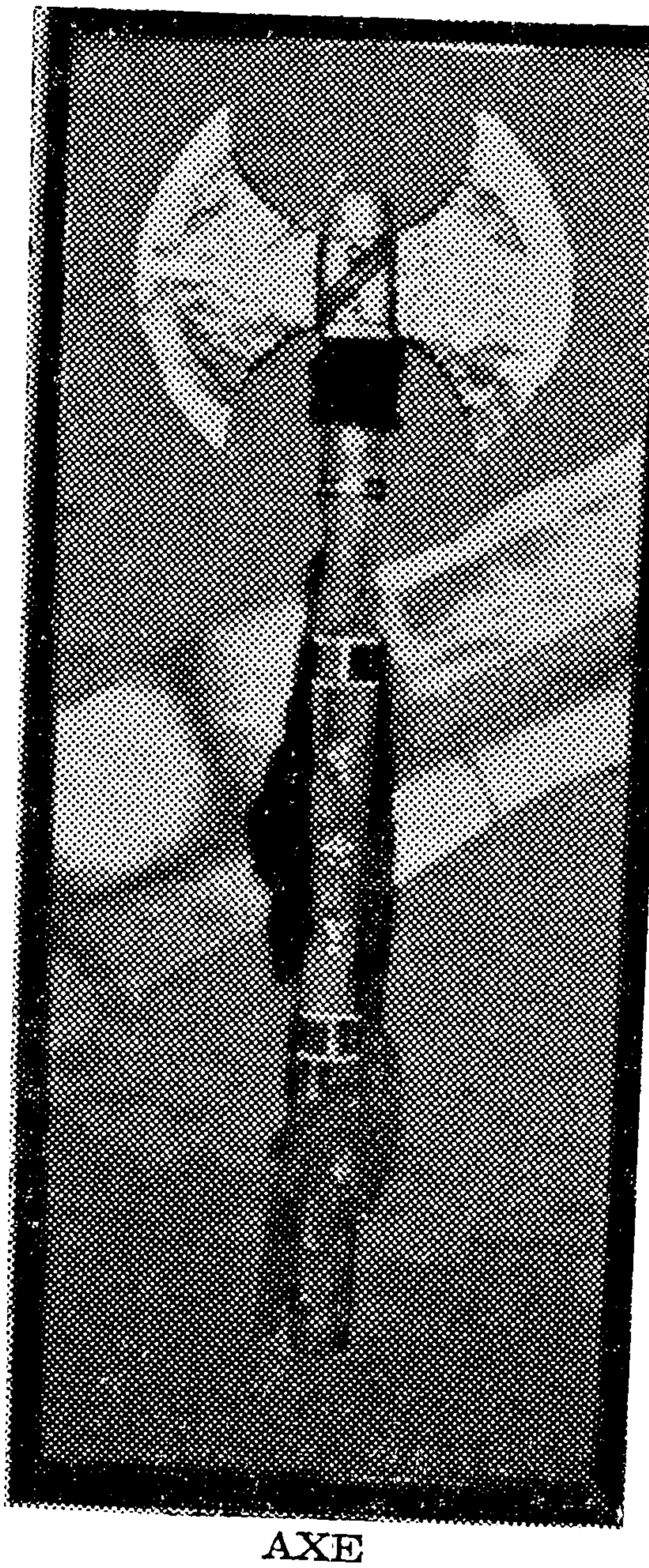
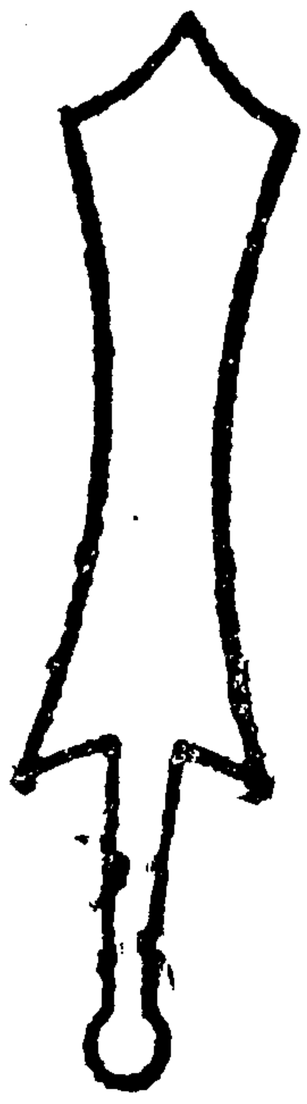
that. Similarly, religious symbols are not only difficult to understand, but they have an extremely wide and deep connotation and hence they are enormously useful in the religious life. As the use of symbols contributes to the success of commercial products, similarly religious symbols contribute to the progress of religion. To an ordinary Christian, a cross is a reminder of Jesus and his crucifixion but historians would say that the symbol of the cross has appeared in various cultures from time immemorial and it has undergone many changes and adaptations. It never disappeared competely, as it was meaningful and useful to the spiritual aspect of human life.

CROSS



AXE



KHANDA

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A double-edged axe symbol was used by the prehistoric Egyptians as a sign of power and divinity. Later on, this symbol underwent a lot of changes, and finally appeared again in the Sikh religion in the form of the KHANDA (a double-edged sword) and, curiously enough, it represented the same thing, Power and Divinity.

Historians further confirm that wisdom is revealed to wise people through symbols. Art, literature, poetry, religion, etc., which deal with the unconscious, are full of symbolism. One of the latest approaches to the study of the unconscious mind is through symbols.

Religious faith is deeply rooted in the unconscious, and the unconscious is accessible only through very complex symbols. Hence symbolism is inseparably linked with religion. I think we have well established the necessity of symbols in our life and particularly in religion.

The Sikh Bangle

It was customary in India (and it still is) for the sister to put a 'RAKHI'* on the wrist of her brother signifying her affection and her dependance on her brother in times of danger. The brother would be prepared to sacrifice his own life and to save the honour of the country and that of his sister from invaders and tyrants. The ceremony usually took place at the time of the brother's departure for adventure or for a campaign. This implied that the females were weaker than the males and that they had to be protected by the males. When Guru Gobind Singh baptised his Sikhs (1699) he discontinued this practice among his Sikhs and instead made it compulsory for all his Sikhs (male or female) to wear a steel bangle (Kara) instead of a 'woollen Rakhi.' The idea was that all males and females are not only equal but also strong enough to defend themselves. All the Guru's followers, irrespective of sex, were trained to fight in self-defence and to help the oppressed. Thus this steel bangle, unlike the woollen Rakhi,

* A multi-coloured and richly decorated woollen flower, which is tied round the wrist of a brother by the sister. Usually brothers reciprocate this gesture by pledging not only physical protection to their sisters in the times of danger but also monetary gifts. The festival falls in August every year.

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became the symbol of freedom and of the equality of the sexes, and the Sikh women not only derived courage, but also shared the national struggle with their brothers. The Guru's idea of making his female followers brave, fearless and courageous was demonstrated by several Sikh women. Mai Bhago, Dharam Kaur and Sahib Kaur were some of those, who not only fought shoulder to shoulder with their brothers, but also commanded the Sikh platoons. The Kara thus led to a great awakening in Society and boosted the morale of Sikh men and especially women, who no longer remained weak (Abla) but became as brave as lions (Singh).

Leaving aside the historical background of the bangle, let us now consider the philosophical and psychological interpretation of this symbol. It is circular in shape. The circle is one of the most important and oldest of symbols. It is known as 'Mandala,' a word borrowed from Sanskrit. The psychologists consider the Mandala to be one of the most important arche-types which shape our conscious and unconscious behaviour. Philosophically it is highly significant. It is a symbol of strength and integrity, a symbol of obedience, equality, oneness, universality and eternity.

Structural engineers know that the round shape is the best shape for strength, as it distributes a blow or strain. They increase the strength of weak part by corrugating it. The roundness of the skull shows nature's ingenuity in protecting our brain, the most important organ of our body. A round object, if it is weak, cannot keep its roundness when subjected to strain. For example, the wheels of a car remain round to the degree to which they are strong and inflated. Any wheel weaker or short of air will lose its roundness. As long as it is round it continues to bear the strain and pressure. No wonder most of the Sikhs when subjected to torture and coercion maintained their integrity of character. Bhai Taru Singh happily preferred the removal of his skull to the removal of his Keshas (hair), Bhai Mani Singh happily bore the torture of being cut to pieces joint by joint. Baba Banda Bahadur's flesh was pulled off from his living body with hot pincers but he did not renounce his faith.

In higher mathematics the round symbol is called Zero (0) which is again significant. Divide a number by zero: ($X \div 0 =$ infinity) and it becomes infinity. That is, the Mandala can raise a small quantity to infinity. In the above example, the

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value of X, whether it is big or small, is immaterial as long as it is being raised by the 'Mandala.' Thus the wearer of the steel bangle should never worry whether he is great or small, what he should be careful of is that he should be supported by the attributes of the 'Mandala,' his zeroness, and his humble nature. This attribute is further illustrated by the mathematical fact $X^{\circ} = 1$. When the power of a number is regarded as zero (0) it becomes one. That is, when a Sikh combs his hair in the morning and in the evening, he raises his right arm above his head and the bangle goes above his head. His power is symbolically raised to zero (0), or in common words, he says, "O Almighty God, Wonderful Lord (Waheguru) you are omnipotent, I am nothing, I am puny, I am zero, and his value becomes one. Who is only one?

Who has no rival? None but God!" So, he loses himself or his ego and thus enjoys the elixir of 'Name,' and becomes one with God. It is a symbolic reduction of his ego, a sublimation of his soul—a way to unite him with God. Once again the tying of a turban round the head symbolizes the same effect. The bangle is called 'Kara' and another associated word is 'Kari,' which means link, so it is a symbolic way of linking with God.

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'Kara' also means strict and the associated word 'Kari' also means handcuff (Hath Kari). Looked at from this angle, the bangle on the right hand shows one's discipline. That is, one is not free to do anything one likes, but one has to remain under some wholesome restrictions. Like a true Christian one says, "Under Wholesome restrictions I find perfect freedom." This sounds a bit paradoxical, but so is most wisdom paradoxical. It is steering between two dangers that is why the master sprinkled the elixir (Amrit) into the eyes of his followers, so that the Khalsa (True Followers) are enabled to receive the divine vision. A person is free to the degree to which he is responsible. An irresponsible person would find himself in trouble sooner or later. He cannot remain free and escape the law of a responsible society. For example, a careful and responsible driver who obeys the set rules drives freely and enjoys his driving. While an irresponsible driver, who does not obey rules or who does not know the rules, or who is a learner, is always under a strain and cannot drive freely. In Islam 'Musalman' means a person who submits himself to the will of God. Thus the bangle on the right wrist of a Sikh enables him to have the good qualities of a true Christian, a holy Muslim and a pure Sikh (Khalsa) rolled into one. What a wonderful gift from our unfathomable Master, Guru Gobind Singh!

Some of the Sikhs give a wrong meaning to the Verse 'SATGUR SIKH KE BANDHAN KATE' (The master frees his disciple from restrictions) and hold that we should not have any restrictions. The master does it, he makes his follower free from bondage but by making him responsible. They forget the Verse 'BANDE SO JO PAWE VICH BANDI' (True humans are those who accept discipline).

Thus to free us from bonds or temptations, we must accept responsibilities or wholesome restrictions. Thus, the bangle demands that the wearer should surrender unconditionally to the Almighty. Even in the highway code triangles warn, rectangles inform but circles command. Thus the master demands from us responsibilities.

Let us discuss another property of the circle. That is the constancy of its radius which is the distance of any point on the circumference from the centre. It reminds us of the equality of mankind and speaks against any kind of discrimination, of colour creed, caste, class or religion, etc. A true Sikh wearing a bangle

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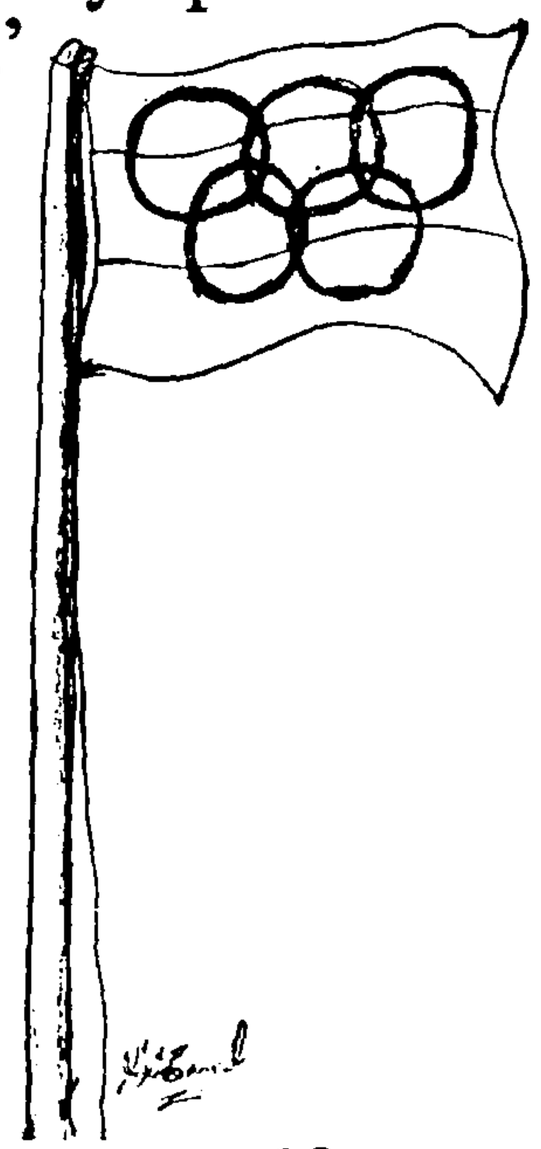
will keep in his mind that all human beings are equal in God's court, as they are all children of God. It enables him to transcend all the divisions which separate man from man and makes him free from hatred, jealousy and prejudice, etc., or in other words, it blesses him with unbiased and scientific outlook. My dear wearer of the bangle! Remember all people are at an equal distance from God wherever they stand in the world. Our master would never bless a person who generates hatred on the basis of caste, colour creed, nationality or any other distinction. The caste system among the Sikhs is forbidden. "The father is one and we are all children of one father." (EK PITA EKAS KE HAM BARAK.)

Furthermore, the circumference of a circle shows its continuity as it has no starting or ending point. The never-ending natural processes work in a cycle of carbondioxide and oxygen, the water cycle, the nitrogen cycle, etc. Thus it brings the wearer of the bangle into contact with Eeternity and it reminds him of the infinity of his master. It gives him boundless self confidence. The collar around a dog's neck reminds the public that he belongs to somebody who is responsible for him. They dare not maltreat him, particularly if the master is strong and is likely to remain strong in the future. What about the dog whose master is infinite, omnipotent and unfathomable? A person who wears Guru Gobind Singh's collar is really great because his master is great.

The 'Mandala' (The Circle) appears on the olympic flag as well, representing the unity of mankind and of the five continents. Olympic Games themselves represent sportsmanship and struggle for its own sake. The Olympic Motto is 'Participation is more important than winning.'



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The bangle reminds a Sikh that 'struggle is the meaning of Life, victory or defeat is in the hands of God.' It reminds a Sikh of what Guru Nanak said, "He is the doer of everything, man is powerless." (KARE KARAI APE AP, MANAS KE KICHH NAHI HATH.) The wearer of a bangle is constantly reminded of this philosophy. How happy is the person who leaves the fruit of his labour in God's hands! He would never grumble.

Let us consider everyday life in the machine age. If we eliminate the wheels from machines, the whole edifice of modern civilization would tumble down like a house of cards. In other words, the progress of man depends upon this circle. No wonder that some people attribute the meaning of progress to the 'Mandala.' Even the Indian National flag displays the same symbol (Ashoka-chakra) on it, hoping that the prosperity of the nation will be perpetual.

How great is Guru Gobind Singh who has placed the symbol of prosperity into the hands of the Sikhs, themselves! No wonder the Sikhs are the most enterprising community in India and perhaps abroad. Forming only 1.2 per cent of India's population their services in industry, military, sports and transport, etc., are admirable. Even abroad, the contribution they make is bigger than their numbers warrant. They have a marvellously inspiring history.

The Mandala in the realm of religion

Specialists in comparative religion, psychology, literature, art and anthropology confirm that the Mandala symbol has been very persistent in the history of religion. In ancient China, for instance, the symbol ⊙* represented one supreme power, the Great Architect of the universe. The celestial world and heaven were represented by the Egyptians and by the Maya by round symbols.

In Rome, the Romans used domes as a symbol of imperial power and divinity. In the church of Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia)

* H. A. Giles, "Historic China" page 389.

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in Constantinople, the dome symbolizes the Glory of God (Encyclopaedia Britanica). If you study the symbol of the Christian Cross (†), it has appeared in various different forms and psychologists regard it as a form of Mandala. In Islam, domes and arches exhibit the symbolism of Mandala. Among Hindus, religion is full of Mandala, e.g. Swastika is a form of Mandala. The snake around Shiva's neck is also symbolic of a Mandala.

From the study of various religions and their symbolism one is thoroughly convinced about the spiritual significance of the ring. Naturally, any religion in the absence of divinity cannot claim to be perfect. Thus, the bangle constantly reminds the wearer of the Supreme Divine Power. Hence Guru Gobind Singh, the bestower of the bangle, has exalted the Sikhs by giving them this marvellous symbol which humanity as a whole may aspire to wear.

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ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤੇਹ।

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਮਹਾਰਾਜ ਦੀ ਪੰਜਵੀਂ ਜਨਮ ਸ਼ਤਾਬਦੀ ਤੇ ਸਾਲ ੨੦੦੧, ਸਿੱਖ ਮਿਸ਼ਨਰੀ ਸੁਸਾਇਟੀ ਯੂ.ਕੇ, ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੇ ਪਰਚਾਰ ਹਿਤ, ਬੁਹਤ ਪੁਸਤਕਾਂ ਵੰਡੇਗੀ, ਆਪਣੀ ਅਤੇ ਆਪਦੇ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਦੀ ਚਲੀ ਆ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਹੁਣ ਕਿਸੇ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦੀ ਮੁਥਾਜ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ। ਆਪਣੇ ਗੁਰੂਆਂ ਦੇ ਜੀਵਨ- ਚਰਿਤਰਾਂ ਤੇ ਅਸੂਲਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣਾ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਤਕ ਪਹੁੰਚਾਉਣਾ ਹਰ ਸਿੱਖ ਦਾ ਪਰਮ ਧਰਮ ਹੈ। ਇਸੇ ਖਾਤਰ ਸੰਤਿਗ਼ਰਾਂ ਨੇ ਤਨ, ਮਨ ਅਤੇ ਧਨ ਨਾਲ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਅਸਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਨਾ ਕੇਵਲ ਵਚਨ ਹੀ ਲਿਆ ਸੀ ਸਗੋਂ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਸਿਰ ਮੰਗਕੇ ਦੁਨੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਦਿਖਾ ਦਿਤਾ ਸੀ ਕਿ ਧਨ ਤੇ ਮਨ ਤਾਂ ਇੱਕ ਪਾਸੇ ਰਹੇ, ਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਆਪਣਾ ਸਿਰ ਵੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਨੂੰ ਅਰਪਣ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਕਦੀ ਸੰਕੋਚ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਦੇ।

ਸੰਤਿਗ਼ਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਤੇ ਅਸੂਲਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਪਰਚਾਰਨ ਦੀ ਜਿੰਨੀ ਲੋੜ ਅੱਜ ਪਛਮੀ ਦੇਸਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੈ ਉਨੀ ਸ਼ਾਇਦ ਹੋਰ ਕਿਤੇ ਨਹੀਂ। "ਬਾਬਾਣੀਆਂ ਕਹਾਣੀਆਂ ਪੁਤ ਸਪੁਤ ਕਰੇਣ" ਦੇ ਮਹਾਂਵਾਕ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ, ਸਾਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਬਜ਼ੁਰਗਾਂ ਤੇ ਗੁਰੂਆਂ ਦੇ ਅਸੂਲਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦੁਹਰਾਉਂਦੇ ਤੇ ਦੂਜਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਦਸਦੇ ਰਹਿਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਧਰਮ ਪਰਚਾਰ ਦੀ ਇਹ ਸੇਵਾ ਹੁਣ ਤਕ ਸੰਗਤਾਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਦਿਤੇ ਗਏ ਦਾਨ ਤੇ ਉਤਸ਼ਾਹ ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਹੋ ਸਕੀ ਹੈ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਸਿੱਖ ਮਿਸ਼ਨਰੀ ਸੁਸਾਇਟੀ (ਯੂ.ਕੇ) ਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਪਾਸਿਉਂ ਕੋਈ ਪੱਕੀ ਆਮਦਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਖ ਪੰਥ ਵਿੱਚ ਅਤੇ ਖਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਵੀਰਮੀਂ ਵਜੋਂ ਵੀਰਾਂ ਤੇ ਭੈਣਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਦਾਨੀ ਸੱਜਣਾਂ ਦਾ ਘਾਟਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਜੋ ਆਪਣੇ ਦਸਵੰਧ ਵਜੋਂ ਇੱਕ ਇੱਕ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਦਾ ਖਰਚ ਸਾਰੇ ਦਾ ਸਾਰਾ, ਇਕੱਲੇ ਇਕੱਲੇ ਹੀ ਦੇ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ। ਅਜੀਂ ਸਾਰੇ **ਧਰਮ ਅਸਥਾਨਾਂ, ਜੱਥੇਬੰਦੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਸੰਗਤਾਂ** ਪਾਸ ਪੁਰਜ਼ੋਰ ਅਪੀਲ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਵੀ ਵੱਧ **ਮਾਇਕ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ** ਦੇਕੇ "ਹਉ ਮੂਰਖ ਕਾਰੇ ਨਾਇਆ ਦੇ ਮਹਾਂਵਾਕ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਸੇਵਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸੇਵਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਲਾਈ ਰਖਣ ਅਤੇ ਵੱਧ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਸੇਵਾ ਲੈਣ।

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